

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1485

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation, March 31, 1999  
Ways & Means, April 2, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to the Whidbey Island game farm.

**Brief Description:** Selling the Whidbey Island game farm.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Capital Budget (originally sponsored by Representatives Barlean and Anderson).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation: 3/22/99, 3/31/99 [DP-WM].  
Ways & Means: 4/2/99 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & RECREATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Morton, Oke, Rossi, Snyder, Spanel and Stevens.

**Staff:** Ross Antipa (786-7413)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Bauer, Vice Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Fraser, Honeyford, Kline, Kohl-Welles, McDonald, Rasmussen, Rossi, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau, West, Winsley and Zarelli.

**Staff:** Kari Guy (786-7437)

**Background:** The Whidbey Island Game Farm encompasses approximately 170 acres. About 120 acres of the game farm is located inside the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve established by Congress in 1978. The Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve was established to commemorate the first thorough exploration of the Puget Sound area by Captain George Vancouver in 1792; settlement by Colonel Isaac Neff Ebey, who led the first permanent white settlers to Whidbey Island; the early active years of the Federal Donation Land Law of 1850-55; and the growth since 1883 of the historic town of Coupeville.

The former Department of Game, using revenue from the sale of hunting licenses, purchased the Whidbey Island Game Farm in 1945 from a private party for the purpose of developing and operating a game farm. The department raised pheasants on the property for recreation

there and elsewhere in the state. Over the past three biennia, the Legislature has appropriated \$2,175,000 in the capital budget to consolidate the department's game farms operations into Lewis County and since then, the Whidbey Island property has been used for a game bird holding and distribution center.

The portions not proposed for sale are 30 acres for the game farm operations and 10 acres of native prairie habitat and its buffer. The Department of Fish and Wildlife has a proposal to sell 130 acres of the former game farm that are surplus to the department's needs in order to address a shortfall in receipts to the wildlife account.

**Summary of Bill:** The Department of Fish and Wildlife must endeavor to sell the Whidbey Island Game Farm located in Island County. If the sale takes place within one year after the effective date, the department may only sell the game farm to a nonprofit corporation, consortium of nonprofit corporations, or a municipal corporation for purposes of undeveloped open space and historical preservation. If the sale takes place more than one year after the effective date, this condition does not apply. In addition, the State Treasurer is directed to loan \$694,000 from the state general fund to the Department of Fish and Wildlife if the property is not sold by June 30, 1999, to address a shortfall in receipts to the wildlife account. The loan must be repaid by June 30, 2001, or when the department sells the property, whichever occurs earlier.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** The Whidbey Island Game Farm property is surplus to the needs of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the sale of the property would bring much needed cash to the department. This is unique open prairie habitat that is of interest for purchase as open space. Local residents support the property remaining as open space.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Representative Kelly Barlean, prime sponsor; Rob Harbour, Ebey's Landing NHR; Robinson Lappin, Ebey's Landing Trust Board; Len Barson, The Native Conservancy; Elyse Kane, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.